

D R A F T

CONCEPT FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AT THE MID-CAREER LEVEL

CIA does not and has never had a coherent, systematic, or explicated leadership development program.\* This is in contradiction to other major organizations in the private and public sector that have a reputation for being well-run and for being excellent. The Agency's haphazard development of its future leaders arises from its early history, and from the nature of its work--compartmented, variegated, fast-moving, and reactive. The Agency's corporate culture puts strong stock on day to day performance and less on the future of individuals, or of the organization. How badly--or, indeed, how well--CIA has been served by this approach to its future leaders is not objectively knowable. The perspective of outsiders has not been a clear guide. McBer Associates and other outside management experts have stated--with some reservations--that CIA has been well-led and well-run; some Directors and Deputy Directors have not disagreed, but have also thought CIA's personnel and developmental system flawed and in need of repair.

\*The terms "leaders, managers and executives" are used interchangeably in this paper for convenience. There are differences between leaders and managers, but those differences are not self-explanatory and no purpose would be served to wring-out the issue in this paper.

Perhaps the most useful perspective comes from senior CIA professionals themselves who profess that:

--our SIS people are not all they should be;

--and we should do better in developing them.

But, at the same time, if you ask these same managers what they would do different, the answer seems to be not much. (See the OTE monograph Executive Development in CIA dated February 1984.) This leads, ineluctably, to the conclusion that the shortcomings of our executives are not thought--by the people who are in a position to do something about them--to be very serious.

It is not surprising, therefore, that earlier efforts to develop future leaders like the 1958 Midcareer Executive Development program, the Senior Seminars of the 1970s and the Senior Officer Development Course were severely limited in what they attempted to achieve, and ultimately gave way to something else.

The premise of the following proposal, however, is that there is a growing undercurrent of support in the Agency for serious experimentation in the development of leaders. This undercurrent is at least viscerally related to the fact that CIA has gone through a great period of change, and that it faces even greater change in the coming years. (Not the least of which is the absorption, cultivation, and acculturation of great numbers of new employees. By the end of FY 1985 more than one out of every three employees would not have been with CIA in 1980.) The undercurrent is part of the swelling demand for training of all kinds. It has found tangible expression in the recent development--for the first

time in the history of CIA or the Intelligence Community--of analyst and analyst supervisor training, in the first-time ever systematic look at the DS&T's developmental and training needs, and in the DO's recent "Looking Glass" experiment and the Directorate's resulting interest in an encompassing management training program.

It may be only slightly hyperbolic to see these stirrings, and our rapid people and technological change, and the "excellence" movement, as adding up to the substantive and ideological foundation for a renaissance in CIA. That is, the re-flowering of the original idea and practice of an innovative, can-do group of people who know what the job is and know that they are different from other government servants. We should test the hyperbole.

If our premise is that the time is right and that we should move ahead, our underlying bias on what is to be done is conservative. What follows is a program that is designed to work in CIA the way CIA is and is likely to remain, not the way it might become, or some may wish it to be. To work, this program must be perceived to meet the current, as well as the future needs of the individual and the Agency. To work, this program must not demand that Agency managers compel their people to do things they do not want to do, or that the managers or their people re-think their priorities. This program must be seen by the participants as enhancing their careers and by managers as an important investment in their people for which they are held accountable by their superiors.

### The Basic Idea

There are definable skills and knowledge that help make successful managers and leaders in any organization, including CIA. Skills can be strengthened by training and by practice (i.e., experience). Some individuals have all of them in amplitude. Most do not. To upgrade the quality of our senior managers we must ensure that they have had the opportunity to work on their skills and to understand their inherent strengths and weaknesses well before they become senior managers. Also, the organization should have some professional insight into the capabilities and potential of its leadership candidates.

### The People

The program would be designed for the highest potential officers in the GS 12 - 13 range. These are the individuals that the Directorates believe are the best bets among their peers to reach leadership (i.e. SIS) positions. The idea is to get individuals who already have some track record of performance but whose elevation is not foreordained, and whose experience and age is such that they are still susceptible to development. Also, we need individuals who are, to some extent, not locked-into high pressure jobs from which they cannot be spared even for relatively short periods of time.

We foresee taking into the program about 30 individuals each year. (We would probably want to start with fewer and we could in time push the numbers somewhat higher.) Since we promote about 60 new SIS officers per year (a number that is likely to grow in the coming years), this means that most SIS officers will not pass through the program. This will be comforting to those who do not

get into the program. It also means that the program should be aiming to reach those potential SIS officers who are most likely to rise within the SIS ranks.

#### EEO

In order to better the Agency's performance on equitably promoting women and minorities through the ranks to SIS positions, the program would take a higher proportion of women and minorities. The program is not for upward mobility but it would have an affirmative action component. We would not lower the program's standards, but we would enroll a higher proportion of women and minorities than their proportion of the GS 12 and 13 ranks. Also, some of the training components would be specifically geared to help women and minorities work and compete more effectively in CIA.

#### The Design

The participants would remain in their current assignments, doing their current work, while they were in the program. The reasons are that CIA managers are very reluctant and usually will not volunteer their best people for developmental assignments that take them off-line, particularly for awkward periods of time (like three or six months. This was one of the key reasons for recent "executive development" failures.) Also, most ambitious Category I officers are reluctant to push for a developmental assignment if that assignment is likely to be detrimental to advancement in the short term. Finally, it makes more sense pedagogically and developmentally to work a program like this over a longer (say one to two years) rather than a shorter period of time. Participants have the opportunity to move forwards between the real world and their developmental experience, increasing the odds that the

training and development will be more meaningful, by being more immediately applicable. Time also increases the opportunity for gestation and absorption.

Each participant would begin the program with an assessment of his or her psychological make-up, management and technical skills, and substantive knowledge. A number of assessment instruments are widely used in the corporate world and have been "validated", i.e., proven to be a good predictor of on-the-job performance. The main purpose of these assessments is to give the individual an appreciation of his or her strengths and weaknesses and to help the participant design a program that fits his particular needs. However, the assessments would also be fed back to the participant's home Directorate for its use in determining future assignments, etc.

The program would include training or developmental assignments in the following areas:

#### General Skills

- writing
- briefing
- computer (i.e., computer literacy, VM, AIM)
- interpersonal (Leadership Styles & Behavior, POCM, NLP)
- equal opportunity

#### Specialized Skills

- to be determined by sponsoring Office or Directorate.

For example, Ops training refresher, or an intelligence analysis seminar.

Managment Skills

- management/supervision in CIA
- counseling
- analysis for managers
- budgeting
- leadership/styles, approaches, etc.

CIA Exposure

- Midcareer Course or equivalent exposure to total Agency
- series of one week exposures to different offices (at Chief/  
Deputy Chief level)

Substance

- USSR
- intelligence futures: impact of technology, collection and  
analytic trends
- foreign and domestic challenges and opportunities for the  
U.S. (like AIS)

Non-CIA Exposure

- one/two week introduction to policy community (DOD, NSC,  
State) and Intelligence Community
- series of one/two week exposures to policy and Intelligence  
Community
- Brookings or other appropriate programs

The foregoing is not exhaustive. Nor would all students be equally exposed to all aspects of the program. For example, a participant who was an accomplished writer, would not waste time on strengthening writing skills.

### Incentives

In the past, we have not built incentives into our executive development programs to encourage the participation of our ablest officers. This, too, has contributed to the failure of earlier efforts. Smart officers understand that there is little or no traditional "ticket punching" in the Agency. Hence, there has been no careerist reason to pursue a program of training or development that is not mandated for him by superiors. Indeed, as indicated above, they have perceived disincentives for doing so. We must build incentives, as well as avoid disincentives, if we are to succeed.

Of the Directorates, the DO is in the best position to make incentives work. Its system of promotion panels and "precepts", i.e. written explicit criteria on which panels evaluate candidates for promotion, is made to order for institutionalizing a mid-career leadership development program. It would be relatively easy to build into the precepts participation in this (or other programs, for that matter) as a positive factor in the consideration for promotion. Smart officers would soon learn that to be chosen for the program was a mark of approval, a sign of better things to come, and a tangible way of helping one's promotion chances. In effect, we would have created a limited "ticket punching"



situation. Limited, because being the program would not--since we would only be taking in about 8 - 10 DO officers per year--be a sine qua non for advancement.

The other Directorates are not structured to easily institutionalize such change. Deputy Directors can give orders and effect temporary change, but institutionalization--i.e. change that persists over time and under different leaders--is another matter.

For individuals in these Directorates, the incentives should be more immediate and tangible. It might be possible, for example:

- to give promotions to everybody who successfully completes the program (but what of people who were to be promoted in any event over the period of time?)
- to give participants a QSI or cash award on completion
- for some candidates, to arrange the next--more responsible and high graded position--that will be made available after program completion.

In truth, a handshake and a small ceremony would probably be incentive enough if they were genuinely emblematic of the importance attended by the Directorate (and the home career service) to the program and to the individuals. For most officers, who have been in the Agency long enough to get into the program, they would probably prefer cash.

### Management

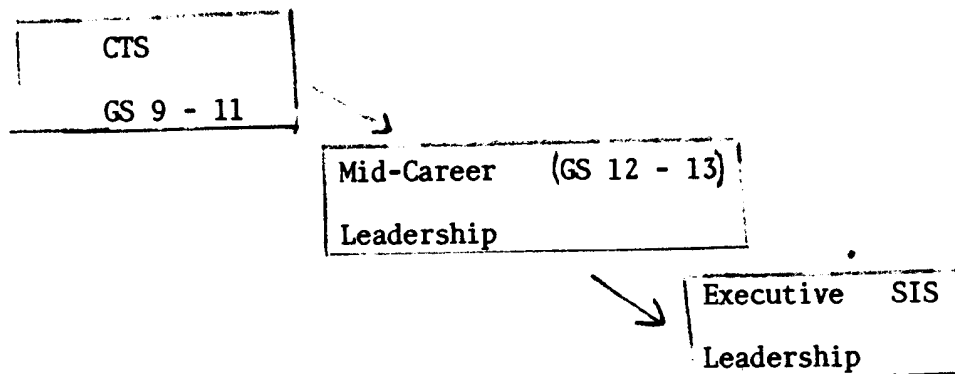
OTE would put the program together--with the advise of the participating Directorates and Career Services--and manage it. The Director of OTE would play a key role in making the program work. He would:

- 1) accept or reject the Directorate's nominees;
- 2) certify that a participant's successful completion of the program has some meaning, i.e. that participants are held accountable for a reasonable level of performance.
- 3) organize a panel of senior Agency officers and make continuing use of their expertise and experience
- 4) make a recommendation to the Executive Committee on whether to continue the effort. To avoid continuing a program that is not meeting its objectives, OTE would end the program two years after its inception, unless the Executive Committee explicitly ordered its continuation.

If the Director of OTE, in effect, must be the conscience of the leadership development program, the program can only do well if the deputy directors take a continuing strong interest in it. There is no way to legislate this interest, and we have tried to conceptualize a program that is not totally dependent on the enthusiasm of any deputy director. But, finally, the program is not worth starting unless the deputy director is committed to the possibility of it succeeding.

Connection

This program, along with the newly started Agency-wide CT and "Executive Development" programs (i.e. SIS officers) would constitute the skeleton of an Agency career development path.



There might be a missing link between mid-career leadership and the SIS ranks. But this link could be made after we have had some experience with the other major elements.

With this kind of program in place, we can conceive of a large cadre of CIA officers who have had strong ties built and maintained through their careers even if they have spent most of their professional life in one service.

Questions

Does it make more sense to keep people in present jobs rather than concentrate their training into finite period--like 3 - 6 months.  
Surely offices would be willing to give up GS-12 - 13s.

Maybe, but its still likely that many GS-12 and 13s would consider themselves disadvantaged by being out of offices for a year, or, in some ways even worse, for a period like 3 or 6 months. It is also important, psychologically, to decouple development and growth from "courses" and to training.

Why do the individuals in the program have to be the highest potential? Why don't we let the Directorates send whoever they want?

The assumption is that we do not have the resources to run large numbers of individuals through the program, hence the best way to maximize our limited resources is by being selective. Also, it only takes a few inappropriate candidates to undermine the credibility of what you're trying to do--really develop future managers. Of course, it is right to question whether we want to explicitly try to develop our future leaders.

Leadership is an art not a science and leaders are born, not developed.

Yes. But also remember that there are few if any world-class artists in history who have not trained assiduously. Also, training has enabled lesser lights to make a significant and, in the total, even a profound contribution to civilization.

Think about the SIS officers you have known in CIA. If you can say with a true heart that most of them are natural leaders and managers for whom training and development would have been of incidental importance, then do not support this effort.

This proposal is not very ambitious. The GS-12 or 13 who comes out of it still has not been developed as a CIA officer. What we need to do is to establish circumstances that enable individuals to emerge and flourish as CIA, not just career service, intelligence officers.

Yes. But we're skeptical that anything much more ambitious would work at this time. The last thing we need is another paper exercise. The proposition here is to do something that is intrinsically useful, and something that has a 50/50 chance of working the way it is designed to. In the area of executive leadership, the Agency has never succeeded in doing that much. There is no reason why we could not build something more ambitious and better, having done something that works well.

What are we doing for the great numbers of managers in CIA--most of whom will not reach the SIS ranks?

We are working on that. By the end of the year, we hope to have a paper that puts together all of the management training that is now taking place in CIA into a coherent plan. The plan will indicate where we are short and how we would propose to remedy the shortfalls.

Can OTE deliver an excellent mid-career leadership program?

Absolutely. But it will need help.

Do we have to undertake this on an Agency-wide basis?

If you believe that we need to do better integrating and team building among our people, then it would be better if all Directorates played. But it is not a necessary condition. We could do it just as well for one Directorate, or even, one office.

In fact, OTE could do it without the explicit endorsement of any career service. Announce the availability of the program and take open applications. It would be an interesting experiment.

How expensive?

Not sure until we work out a detailed prospectus. Keep in mind that many of the program components are already being done--just not in a systematic way for a group of individuals. Also, some of the most useful experiences will cost time and attention, but not new outlays of money.

This sounds like an elite program. Wouldn't that be demoralizing and destructive of the non-elite?

CIA is, and ought to be, a meritocracy. We should not be ashamed that we reward and attempt to cultivate excellence. It is incumbent that we accept only the truly excellent, that we work them hard and hold them accountable for performance. Thus, the good news is that you've been nominated and accepted into the program and you will be rewarded for successful completion; the bad

news is that you are expected to live up to high standards of effort and performance. It should not be easy to hold a full-time job and to be in this program. Our elite is not guaranteed anything about the future. Nor will SIS ranks be filled at any time in the future exclusively by officers who have been through the program. In short, not being in the program does not exclude one from the future "elite".

Summary: Executive Development at Mid-Career Level

- o start with 30 to 50 Category I GS 12 - 13 officers.
- o they stay in program for 1 - 2 years but remain on the job.
- o attempt to boost women and other minority representation by affirmative action in admission to program.
- o designed explicitly to strengthen qualities of future leaders.
- o program emphasizes skills and knowledge.
- o built around career service needs.
- o Agency effort, managed by OTE.
- o program dead after two years unless explicit affirmation by Executive Committee or Directorates.